

From: PUC
Sent: Friday, January 3, 2025 8:19 AM
To: [REDACTED]
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Pat and Theresa,

Xcel Energy has transitioned its electric usage meters to smart meters. The utility does not provide an opt-out to its South Dakota customers, similar to what other utilities have done in the state when transitioning to this newer technology. There is no requirement for a utility to offer customers an option to opt-out of technological upgrades and is a business decision in the purview of the utility. Offering only one type of meter allows the utility to serve customers consistently and avoid extra costs for customers associated with different meters, such as the costs of manual meter reading.

Xcel requested recovery to replace meters in docket EL22-017 due to Xcel's current AMR meter technology nearing the end of its life and because replacement parts for current meters would not be manufactured after 2022. Xcel determined AMI meters were the best replacement option available. The request for cost recovery was made in a publicly filed docket, and members of the public were free to provide comments on the proposal, or request intervention in the docket. As part of a settlement approved by the commission in docket EL22-017, the costs associated with the new AMI meters are being recovered through Xcel's infrastructure rider rather than base rates. Xcel provided additional information regarding the AMI project in its infrastructure rider docket, EL23-025.

Public Utilities Commission staff members are aware of concerns some individuals have regarding Radio Frequency emitted by smart meters. RF signals at high levels can have negative biological effects. Because of this, the Federal Communications Commission regulates the levels at which products in the United States can emit RF. The levels established by the FCC use the threshold level at which harmful biological effects occur and then add a large margin of safety. As such, all smart meters have RF levels well below the levels identified by the FCC as having possible negative biological effects.

RF is prevalent in our society. Many household products emit RF at levels similar to or higher than smart meters. Some common products include cell phones, walkie-talkies, cordless telephones, microwaves, remote-controlled cars, wireless internet routers, baby monitors, laptop computers, and clothes dryers.

The PUC is also cognizant of privacy concerns some individuals may have regarding information obtained by a utility. Xcel's tariffs, approved by the commission, include a detailed Customer Data Privacy section that specifies the information Xcel can collect, specifies how Xcel may use that information, when and how disclosures of that information can be made (including when customer authorization is required and that a customer can revoke authorization), and company protection of data. See [South Dakota Electric Rate Book No. 2, Section No. 6, Sheets 7.1-7.4](#). The commission has the authority to take action against Xcel if the company does not adhere to the Customer Data Privacy provisions of this tariff. In addition, Xcel specifically addressed customer information data security and privacy regarding AMI meters in its petition in docket EL23-035, [Attachment 12A](#).

Thank you for reaching out for information regarding Xcel Energy's smart meters.

South Dakota Public Utilities Commission Staff
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